

ELECTORAL MANIFESTO 1979

PREAMBLE

This programme drawn up in view of the direct elections to the European Parliament in 1978 is based on the Declaration of Stuttgart of March 26, 1976.

In March 1976 the Liberal and Democratic Parties of the European Community came together in Stuttgart, formed among themselves a Federation and approved unanimously a Declaration setting out the main lined of their programme for the development of the Community itself into a full Union. In view of the direct elections to the European Parliament to be held in 1978, the programme has been elaborated by the organ of the Liberal and Democratic Federation. It has been finally approved by the Federation's Congress in November 1977 and will form the basis, together with the proposals related to the peculiarities of each country and party, for the electoral campaign of the Liberal and Democratic Parties of the Federation.

1. The creative role of the free and responsible individual in modern society and the unique capacity of the liberal-democratic approach to realize unity amongst the growing diversity of our societies, are central to our attitudes and to this programme.

From the concept of free and responsible individual flows out belief in the dignity of man and his capacity to reason and to take decisions for himself. Freedom of thought and of expression are fundamental for us. We do not conceive of the individual as isolated or in conflict with society. We do not construe self-reliance on his part as implying a negative or even a neutral attitude on the part of society. Nor do we construe social responsibility as implying a negative or passive on the part of the individual. The free and responsible individual answers as such for his action both to himself and to his fellow men. Thus solidarity is born of responsibility and not imposed from above to the mortification or destruction of the individual's creative capacity. Responsibility is thus at the same time individual and social. Out of it stems the greater possibility of achieving equality of opportunities and of remedying injustice, which is a dynamic characteristic of free society. Of these all there is a growing need in a world which is becoming top-heavy and in great danger both through massification and through fragmentation. The more fragmentation increases, the more we need the unique capability of democratic liberalism to ensure unity in diversity. Because we believe in the fruitfulness of a continuous interplay of ideas, inventions and formulas between different individuals and human forces, so long as the interplay takes place in freedom, mutual toleration and under the rule of law, we can profit for ourselves and for others out of

Resolution:

Electoral Manifesto
First EP Elections

Year and Congress:

1977, Brussels,
Belgium

Category:

European
Democracy – ELDR
electoral
programmes

Page:

1

peaceful strife. We are therefore averse to stifling it and capable of making of this central value the cornerstone of a modern civilized human community. The only attitude we cannot tolerate, is intolerance.

2. Liberal democracy is concerned with the need to apply its fundamental values in an ever changing reality. This implies the rejection both of sterile dogmatism and an opportunistic pragmatism.

Our strong appreciation of the continuous search for true solutions through free discussion going to the very roots of the problems under examination, and of the ever changing necessities of life, make us averse to any form of dogmatism. We believe that pre-fabricated doctrinaire solutions for all human problems are impossible and useless. The attempt to apply them invariably leads towards authoritarian regimes, dictatorships and disaster.

On the other hand we believe too strongly in the values we have set out above, in their capability of adapting themselves to new situations and of creating new formulas and in the need to realise them to rely on the opportunistic day-to-day solution of problems.

3. It is in this spirit that the parties to the Stuttgart Declaration, resolved to protect and to promote the rights and freedoms of the individual and desiring to make possible for all citizens of Europe a decent life in a free society, have based their Federation on five major planks: 1) The supreme task of the European Union must be to guarantee human, civil and political rights on the European level; 2) The European Union needs a free democratic constitution based on the principles of division of powers, majority voting and the protection of minorities; 3) The European Union must assure steady and balanced economic growth, thus creating for its citizens the conditions for effective social protection in the vicissitudes of life. This can no longer be done at national level; 4) The European Union needs a common foreign policy covering both the external relations of the European Community and the European Political Co-operation and designed to serve the freedom and security of Europe and peace in the world, side by side with our partners in the Atlantic Alliance, notably the United States, and in the United Nations; 5) The European Union must be founded on the common conviction that the freedom of the individual, equal opportunities for all and the free competition of ideas and parties are indispensable elements of a democratic society.

Resolution:

Electoral Manifesto
First EP Elections

Year and Congress:

1977, Brussels,
Belgium

Category:

European
Democracy – ELDR
electoral
programmes

Page:

2

Each one of those planks has been spelled out in the Declaration of Stuttgart and is further elaborated in the detailed programme that follows this preamble.

4. We are aware of the forces that in the contemporary world militate against the creative individual and against freedom. We hold it to be our task to master such forces and to utilize their positive elements, looking towards the future.

In a period of human history when the increase in population and technological developments make for an increasing and oppressive weight of numbers, of bureaucratic institutions and of rigid planning, when growing expectations of welfare and equality make for growing limitations in the disposal of resources and in the privacy of men, women and individual families; when the growth of nuclear energy for peace and for war of sophisticated armaments make for the tightening of political controls both internally and externally and weigh heavily on economic resources - in such a period the contribution of liberal democratic thought and action coherent as they are in all their parts, is more indispensable than ever to ensure the proper balance between authority and liberty, between national and international, between centralization and devolution, between social and individual.

5. The need for a socially oriented, modern free market economy, based on liberal democratic principles, is increased by recent developments.

We must choose a modern and socially oriented free market economy not only because it is the more productive, because it is a condition of freedom. We need such an economy especially in our countries whose life and welfare and progress are so largely based on world trade, and competition especially with the industrial giants in America and Asia. The steep increase in the price of oil, heralding an era of relative scarcity and high prices for other raw materials and for food-stuffs, underlines this necessity. We have to cope with the worsening of the terms of trade, with increasing expectations of an increasing population for personal consumption and social services and for a more equitable distribution of wealth; with the increasing need for technological developments and new investments; with the requirements of aid and cooperation with the developing countries and with the need to ensure peace through strength sufficient to ensure equilibrium. To do all these things we need the dynamism of enterprise and the democratic management of the economy as a productive whole.

6. Steady and balanced growth in freedom and in peace requires both the dynamism of free enterprise and the overall guidance of

Resolution:

Electoral Manifesto
First EP Elections

Year and Congress:

1977, Brussels,
Belgium

Category:

European
Democracy – ELDR
electoral
programmes

Page:

3

the economy through flexible planning including to guidelines on prices and wages.

To ensure the proper balance between private enterprise and public intervention; between personal consumption and social services; between total consumption and investment; between the needs of our individual nations, those of the European Community and those of the developing countries, means also to ensure that the tensions between classes, nations and groups of nations do not degenerate into bitter conflicts but are harnessed as driving forces for the cause of social and international progress in peace and freedom.

We have thus given in brief the substance of liberal democratic flexible planning. We believe in the need to reach an understanding between the classes and to establish a social pact; to reconcile the entrepreneurs and the workers through participation ; to bring the unions of workers and the organisations of entrepreneurs into the liberal democrat system of checks and balances. These objectives can only be realised in the framework of a liberal-democratic state to which they give in turn substance and strength.

7. Liberal democracy is primarily a political approach. It conceives of political and social institutions and of the economic system not as aims in themselves but as instruments towards ensuring freedom and combating alienation.

It is in this spirit that we look to the family, to education, to savings and private property, to private and public enterprise, not to speak of political and social institutions, such as Parliament; an independent judiciary; free debate in all its forms; the freedom to associate in the political and economic field, We are not wedded to the traditional forms of such institutions, as are the conservatives. We believe to make them beneficial, they must be kept under constant review to take account of the developments of reality.

Whereas authoritarian and marxist regimes condemn man and woman to an increasing alienation even while purporting to give them a more just society and ultimately total and perpetual freedom, liberal democracy strives to render, and can render the individual as self-reliant as effectively possible in all the fields of human endeavour.

8. Liberal democracy has a unique capacity of bringing together individuals and nations.

For the reasons mentioned, liberal democracy has a unique capacity of bringing together individuals and nations, and of overcoming the barriers of nationalism, religion, race and class, without at the same time stifling

Resolution:

Electoral Manifesto
First EP Elections

Year and Congress:

1977, Brussels,
Belgium

Category:

European
Democracy – ELDR
electoral
programmes

Page:

4

the variety of cultural heritages which allows our civilisation to make, in free and peaceful interplay with others, its special contribution to the development of the world towards better understanding, peaceful coexistence and cooperation and towards the enrichment of the spiritual and material aspects of human life.

9. Liberal democrats are in the van of the fight for European Union.

It is in order to attain such aims that we are and have been over the years in the van of the fight for European Union. Our individual states have become too small for their modern responsibilities toward their people and towards the other people of the world. The European contribution is not only cultural: it is economic and political. We require a large internal market in order to ensure competition and specialisation. We require inner and outer strength in order to ensure equilibrium and peace in freedom. We require the moral and material resources which are needed in order to assist in the progress of developing countries. We require a permanent guarantee of peace in a continent that has twice this century being wracked by civil war.

The attainment of full European Union will therefore be a decisive step towards a better and more secure life for all our citizens. It will however also create new internal tensions between the Community and the component states. Community, national and regional planning will have to be coordinated. So will fiscal systems and social security. So the main lines of labour policy and of company legislation. A strong liberal democratic force is needed to keep the balance, to make sure that the European society and the European market-place are neither left to themselves in a state of unhappy bureaucratic anarchy nor stifled by an excessive concentration of power.

10. The task of the new directly elected European Parliament is to bring the principles of liberty and democracy to bear on the problems of the Community and to prepare and propose in the spirit of the Treaty of Rome appropriate measures leading to the necessary evolution of the organs of the Community towards a European Union.

Our last remark, Parliament, as we recalled a moment ago, is a typically liberal and democratic institution. It is through parliament that our countries have moved from absolutism to free democracy. It is in parliament that the interests of the people as a whole can prevail over the interests and prejudices of groups and classes; that majorities can govern and minorities can check them. The task of the new European Parliament elected by universal and direct suffrage is to bring these principles to bear on the problems of the Community: to gather to itself sufficient moral and

Resolution:

Electoral Manifesto
First EP Elections

Year and Congress:

1977, Brussels,
Belgium

Category:

European
Democracy – ELDR
electoral
programmes

Page:

5

political strength to move forward from being a consultative to becoming an operative force; to elaborate and propose in the spirit of the Treaty of Rome appropriate measures leading to the necessary evolution of the organs of the Community towards a European Union, sufficiently cohesive to speak with one strong voice in world affairs, and which does not try to do away with the individual characteristics of our nations and regions. What we need - to end where we started - is unity in diversity. As the Community grows more complex and larger - and we hope that other democratic European countries may join it in the not too distant future - so do these needs grow. It is a typically liberal and democratic task to satisfy them.

Resolution:

Electoral Manifesto
First EP Elections

Year and Congress:

1977, Brussels,
Belgium

Category:

European
Democracy – ELDR
electoral
programmes

Page:

6